The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor according to the industrial, legislative, and general developments, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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FACTORY BUY UNITED STATES DEFENSE BONDS AND STAMPS

Thru Payroll Savings

WHOLE NO. 1797 WILLIAM GREEN, President WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1945 GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer VOL. 35, NO. 38

A FEW FACTS

By GEORGE MEANY

Secretary-Treasurer of the A. F. of L.

Blackpool, England.—Excerpts from the outspoken address of AFL Secretary-Treasurer George Meany before the convention of the British Trades Union Congress follow:

Those who ask the American Federation of Labor to sit in an international labor group alongside of the CIO, thereby putting our house on the auction block and disunity, are perhaps unacquainted with the history of labor in America during the war period. Let me give you a few facts.

The American Federation of Labor officially and consistently supported President Roosevelt in all his efforts in the international field from the days of Hitler's rise in Germany until the President's death in April of this year. In 1934, and for years after, we protested vigorously, if somewhat timorously, against the suppression of all forms of human freedom by the Nazis. We recognized their actions as a deliberate threat to our way of life. In 1938 and 1937 when, it is reasonable to say, the majority of Americans were isolationists, the American Federation of Labor protested vigorously against the aggressions of Japan in the Far East and of Mussolini in Ethiopia. In 1940 when Britain was fighting with her back to the wall, Franklin D. Roosevelt made the decision which helped you stave off defeat and which helped humanity win eventual victory. As Commander-in-Chief of our great nation, he decided that our safety depended upon your ability to resist. He defied the Nazis by turning over to you certain weapons of war which we had. He made available to you fifty destroyers, which you sorely needed, in exchange for certain air base leases. He counted us in on your side.

The American Federation of Labor saw the need and loyally supported every step in the President's defense program. Our members were called upon to construct the arsenal of democracy. With loyal enthusiasm they rallied to the jobs. We went to work to build the tools, the ships, the planes, the guns and the tanks needed to avoid disaster.

And what were our CIO friends, who now loudly proclaim their desire for international unity of labor, doing during these times? Let us see. From the 25th of August, 1939, the date of the Russo-German pact of friendship up until the 23d of June, 1941, the member units which controlled the CIO in those days, and which still control that organization, were busily engaged in efforts to sabotage everything that President Roosevelt was trying to do to save British and America from the scourge of Nazi domination. Perhaps you do not know of the picket signs carried on the streets of our large cities by the dominant organizations of the CIO—picket signs which represented the official position of these organizations. These are a few samples of records. We had a picket line in front of the White House in Washington representing unions of the CIO—prominent unions of the CIO—the representatives of which unions attended the first World Trade Union Congress meeting held here in London last February. And what did these picket signs say? They said—that the Yanks are not coming; that America is not coming to the British chestnuts out of the fire; they accused President Roosevelt, in signs displayed in front of the White House, of taking the bread and butter out of the mouths of American workers to provide bullets for Lister and advocate a policy of British Imperialism.

During this period of time, these same unions, under the same leaders they have today, used every possible means at their command to interfere with and sabotage America's defense program. While the workers of the American Federation of Labor were giving their very best to the construction of tanks, planes, guns and ships with which to fight the Nazi menace, these CIO unions were following the party line and doing their very best to paralyze our efforts to help you fight Hitler.

But there was a change. On June 22, 1941—the party line changed. Those who on June 21, 1941, told us that the Yanks were not coming and that President Roosevelt was starting the American workers on the road to the ruin of British Imperialism, shortly thereafter became military experts. They demanded the immediate opening of a second front, taking the position of course that there was only the one front and that, forsooth, was in the Russo-German front. But if these quick-change party line followers who dominated the CIO in America had been in charge, they would not have sent you the planes at that time, very few tanks or guns to help you or to help the Russians in those grim days of 1941 when Moscow and Suez were alike being threatened in a most serious manner.

This may all seem an ancient history to you. I hope not. Those were the days when the friends of democracy could really be counted. Those were the days after the Atlantic Charter was signed, when the issues were clear-cut and the honest vote of free men—not a plebiscite at gunpoint. Those were the days when the Polish people were promised freedom again; when the Baltic States were recognized as the constituent parts of Russia. We had pledged liberty. Those were the days when the membership and leadership of the American Federation of Labor proved themselves the friends of Great Britain.

We of the American Federation of Labor have been just about as isolationist in the past as have your British Trades Union Congress. Our fidelity to the principles of true democracy isolates us from the intellectual acrobats who get their daily directions for their daily vocal exercises from the Daily Worker or who are hirelings and prostitutes of propaganda.

We assembled ourselves from the so-called World Conference of Labor held in London last February in the belief that we did not need the inspiration of speeches to induce us to push the Axis against the wall. We were not in the least enthusiastic about listening to such speeches from individuals who were friends of the Axis and enemies of yours and ours until Russia was invaded. We could in addition see no advantage in a World Conference to promote world labor unity which permitted and encouraged the attendance of unions which refuse to accept or support the Atlantic Charter.

On the second point—our refusal to sit with the so-called representatives of Russian Labor—let there be no quibbling or misunderstanding; we do not recognize or concede that the trade unions as we understand them exist in the Soviet worker groups are formally and actually instruments of the state. They are official branches of the government and of its ruling dictatorial political party. There can be no freedom of speech or freedom of assembly of the Soviet state, even if this means that the interests of the workers themselves must be subordinated or injured. These so-called trade unions are merely support the Soviet system of worker blacklists and deportations to labor camps that have resulted in virtual enslavement for millions of peasants, workers and professionals. Those who are confined to labor camps with no protection from exploitation and compulsory labor.

The American Federation of Labor is a free, democratic trade union composed of free American workers. Its representatives cannot and will never be speak for the workers in our unions by the democratic methods embodied in its constitution and in the constitutions of its various affiliates. We believe that only through free trade unions can the ideals, aspirations and collective desires of workers anywhere on earth be implemented into constructive action for the improvement of the standard of living, the security and the welfare of man as well as economic freedom. We believe in free speech—a free press—freedom of assemblage—freedom of worship. What common ground for discussion could we find in accepting as fraternal delegates those who claim to be workers but in reality represent the government itself? What could we talk about? The latest unconscionable lining used by Lenz seems to enamor those who think in opposition to the group in power? Or perhaps, bigger and better concentration camps for political prisoners? How can the representatives of a government which suppresses free speech represent free workers? How can they know what the workers are thinking about—what they desire—just what ideals and principles they would have their representatives espouse and uphold?

Let there be no misunderstanding on the American Federation of Labor's position in regard to Soviet Russia. There has been no change in our government's military cooperation with Soviet Russia. We hope our government may find ways and means to achieve similar cooperation in postwar days in the interest of permanent peace. We favored the lend-lease legislation and the aid of Soviet Russia when Russia was invaded and was at war. But in simple honesty, we insist on recognizing the so-called Russian Trade Union movement for what it is—a government-controlled, governmentfostered and government-dominated labor front that denies to the workers of Soviet Russia the basic human freedoms that American workers hold are prerequisite to a free trade union.

When the call first went out for a world conference of national labor centers looking to the form a new international labor organization, the American Federation of Labor had grave doubts as to the character and purpose of the meeting. While the call set forth that the meeting was to be for purely economic, social and cooperative purposes, it was the hope of the meeting to form a world organization to carry on trade union activities along international lines, we were—right I say—rather skeptical. We had substantial reason to believe that the conference would not confine itself to economic and exploratory action. In addition we were positive in our own minds that the character of those invited to attend the conference—the presence of interference indicated beyond question that the conference would not confine itself to trade union matters. Both of these doubts on our part were substantially realized.

The seemingly political character of the conference was further emphasized by the subsequent actions of its so-called continuation committee, which demanded the right to speak for all the workers of the world at San Francisco—another compelling reason for non-participation by the American Federation of Labor.

We believe, as an American workers organization, that we have every right to advise our government as to its actions at any gathering of nations to discuss future world peace or—that matter, any other subject of national interest. In addition, we believe that we have a right to express our opinion and any action our government might take or fail to take at any such conference. But we certainly do not believe that any international trade union gathering has any such right in so far as our country is concerned. Yet we do believe that in a world organization that would attempt to dictate to our government on the conduct of its foreign relations is establishable.

The more radical elements at the British convention here tried to howl Mr. Meany down, but did not succeed. He explained the American Federation of Labor's policy in full detail, and even though the British group may disagree for the time being, expectations are that eventually the BTUC will come around to the federation's position.

AFL Vice President William C. Doherty, the other fraternal delegate, greets the British labor representatives a clear picture of economic conditions in America and discussed postwar recovery prospects.

In a trans-Atlantic radio broadcast, heard in America over the AFL's "Labor-USA" program, Mr. Meany and Mr. Doherty reported on developments at the British convention and described the hardships still facing the British people even though the war has ended.

Meany Raps CIO And Russian "Unions" In Blunt Speech To British Parley

Blackpool, England.—AFL Secretary-Treasurer George Meany told the British Trades Union Congress some plain truths about the international labor situation, much to the discomfiture of the left-wingers.

He informed the British labor convention that the AFL never will become associated with the projected World Trade Union Federation as long as the CIO and the Soviet Russian union group are included.

In blunt, hard-hitting language, Mr. Meany recited the wartime history of the CIO and of the vociferous opposition of its left-wing unions to the United States policy of aiding Britain before Hitler invaded Russia.

With equal frankness, the AFL fraternal delegate exposed the so-called Russian trade union for what they are—government-feminated organizations which serve as dictatorial policemen over workers instead of representing their interests.

Msgr. Ryan Dies In St. Paul

St. Paul, Minn.—The Rt. Rev. Msgr. John A. Ryan, nationally known Catholic liberal and social welfare authority, died here in St. Joseph's hospital at the age of seventy-six.

His death brought to a close, an active career during which the Catholic prelate pioneered in labor legislation and fought continuously for progressive ideas.

Msgr. Ryan's passing was mourned by labor leaders through the country who had always regarded him as a faithful friend and counsellor.

AFL President William Green said:

"No one can correctly measure the great loss which the people of our country, and labor particularly, have sustained as the result of the death of Monsignor Ryan. The officers and members of the American Federation of Labor are grieved at his passing."

President Truman also paid high tribute to Msgr. Ryan. He said:

"We all all miss the wise counsel which he gave so generously out of his long and varied experience. All of his writings and speeches as an economist and sociologist were enlightened by sound common sense and a high degree of moral and ethical values. This was particularly true when he dealt with the problem of labor and the moral implications of a living wage. He always presented the full picture."

AFL Members Entertained GIs Here And Overseas; Relief Plan Grows

New York City.—The first complete report of its world-wide entertainment and relief activities of the United Theatrical War Activities Committee at a campaign meeting of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) at the Hotel Roosevelt.

James Sauter, chairman of the United War Activities Committee and a director of USO Camp Shows, told the meeting that individual entertainers made 82,911 appearances in 30,252 acts serving 7091 units in the eastern area of the United States from May 1, 1941, to V-J Day. In the western and overseas area during the same period the Hollywood Victory Committee was credited with arranging 50,000 personal appearances. All entertainers are members of AFL unions.

He termed the activities of the United Theatrical Committee one of the finest examples of Labor-Management cooperation seen in this country.

Another speaker, Dr. James L. McConaughy, president of Hobart College, told the meeting of Relief, told of his observations on a recent trip to that country.

"The progress China has made in the ten months since my last visit is startling. Our relations there have improved greatly. This is due to the attitude of Lieutenant-General Albert C. Wedemeyer and Ambassador Patrick Hurley in stressing our relations as partners of the Allies."

Speaking of relief needs, Dr. McConaughy said, "Appalling conditions exist in areas recently occupied by the Japanese. American relief is needed now more than ever."

The Labor War Chest luncheon was presided over by Matthew Woll, second vice president of the American Federation of Labor, and president of the Labor League for Human Rights. Mr. Woll said that since 1942 AFL members have contributed about $125,000,000 to the National War Fund, local Community Chests and the American Red Cross. He reported that more than 4,000 AFL officers and members serve on volunteer committees of the Labor League to make this success possible.

In addition, he said, labor's war relief program, serving war victims through trade union movements throughout the world, has given $17,500,000 towards relief and reconstruction. This figure includes $2,750,000 for the coming year's activities. This sum was allotted by the National War Fund.

James Quinn, secretary of the New York Central Trades and Labor Council, said that New York City AFL members gave $1,846,902.26 to the New York National War Fund, the Greater New York War Fund and the Red Cross during 1944. Local contributions to the 1945 campaign of the Greater New York War Fund reached $1,001,000, he said, a 54 per cent increase over the previous year.

Railway Dep't Asks 6-Hour Day Without Reduction In Pay

Washington, D. C.—President William Green of the American Federation of Labor endorsed the demand of the AFL Railway Employes Department for a 36-hour week for railroad shopcraft employes without reduction in pay.

In a letter to M. M. Jewell, the department president, Mr. Green pledged the full support of the American Federation of Labor to the group of seven unions in the department representing 400,000 railway employes.

At present these workers are on a six-day basis of eight hours per day. The Railway Employes Department has called upon the railroads for a six-hour day without wage reductions.

"The American Federation of Labor will wholeheartedly support your program for a shorter work week," Mr. Green wrote Mr. Jewell. "This is fully in accord with the nation's postwar needs. Unless such action is taken, the increased efficiency of railroad workers and technological advances will force large numbers of employes out of jobs. The shorter work week is an important step toward the maintenance of full employment by the postwar period.

"During the war the railroad workers were called upon to perform miracles of transportation and to fulfill long and wearying work schedules. They are none then entitled to a shorter work week now."

In announcing the union drive for the 36-hour week, Mr. Jewell emphasized that his department will proceed in accordance with the terms of existing agreements with the railroads and will follow the orderly processes of collective bargaining prescribed under the Railway Labor Act.

Truman Renews Hard Fight For Jobless Pay Increase

AFL Union Leader Heads Red Cross Unit At Okinawa Seabee Camp

Okinawa.—Clarence E. Oliver, AFL union leader of Portland, Oreg., now is serving as supervisor of American Red Cross installations at 14 Seabee camps on this island on the Japanese doorstep.

"Men of the Naval Construction Battalions," said Oliver at his headquarters here, "have the greatest labor background of any branch of the armed forces. From commanding officers down, they are most frequently union men, sympathetic to the cause of labor even under wartime stresses. In the early days of the war they were volunteers—older men with craft experience—and even now, they are carefully screened by the draft boards to make sure that the most skilled men comprise the Seabees."

Oliver, president of the Portland local of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL, between 1941 and 1943, and a former member of machinist and bollermaker unions, said his labor background has helped immeasurably in dealing with Seabees and their problems.

He reported also that the attitude of service men is not as antilabor as might be indicated by "the hysterical reporting of some newspapers back home."

On the basis of more than two years' experience with GIs at home and overseas, Oliver expressed the belief that returning service men as a whole will not be antilabor.

"In their own defense as job-seekers," he said, "they will join and support unions. What antilabor activity there will be depends on postwar employment. If there are plenty of jobs, there will be fewer occasions for trouble."

Millions Still Get Starvation Wages; Hearings Set On Bill to Lift Floor

Washington, D. C.—Millions of American workers still earn less than a bare subsistence, the Wage-Hour Division of the Department of Labor revealed.

A shocking report, prepared by the economics staff of the division, disclosed that at the peak of the war effort a year ago, when workers supposedly were enjoying high wages, nearly 6,000,000 were still being paid less than 40 cents an hour. The total may even be higher now, the report indicates.

Most of the five millions are in retail trade, service occupations, agricultural labor and other fields not covered by the 40-cent minimum established under the Wage-Hour Act.

Even among manufacturing industries, where the act applies, vast numbers of workers are found who are hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together, the report pointed out.

Out of the 15,000,000 employed in these industries, over a million earn less than 55 cents an hour; 2,500,000 less than 65 cents.

What makes this picture all the gloomier, Division said, is the fact that "the war-born increases in the cost of living will largely remain" even after the war, the report said.

Because of the skyrocketing of prices during the war, the 40-cent-an-hour minimum under the Wage-Hour Act is now worth no more than 30 cents in buying power, the division explained. "Real wages" in all other brackets have been likewise drastically reduced.

This makes an overhauling of the minimum wage under the law more necessary than ever, the report declared.

Upward revision of the present 40-cent minimum, one of the chief recommendations made by President Truman in his recent reconversion message to Congress, will be considered by a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, which resumes hearings September 25.

Leading spokesmen for industry, labor, government, and consumer groups will testify concerning S. 1349, the bill introduced last July by Senator Claude Pepper of Florida and nine other Senators. The bill provides that the minimum wage of 40 cents per hour under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 be increased at once to 65 cents, with subsequent increases over a period of two years to a minimum of 75 cents an hour is reached.

Among those invited to appear at the hearings are Harris B. Setzwallach, Secretary of Labor, and William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor.

Union Sends Relief To Polish Jews

New York City.—Acting in response to the cry for help emanating from the starving and homeless and destitute Jewish population in Poland, a meeting of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union local manageres here voted $100,000 for the immediate shipment of foodstuffs and women's and children's clothing as an initial step in a city-wide drive to be launched immediately.

David Dubinsky, ILGWU president, explained that he had recently received a letter from Joe Schlossberg, minister of social welfare in the Provincial Polish Government, which stated that "Jewish survivors in Poland are in exceptionally hard condition; they have lost everything. Only 100,000 are left of a prewar population of three and a half million. I try to help them by any means are extremely limited."

Mr. Dubinsky also referred to a cable received by the Jewish Labor Committee of Polish Jews in Warsaw, which consists of all democratic and labor groups, stressing the urgent need of clothing, medicament and food for children especially in view of the approaching winter.

The ILGWU president announced that 10,000 worth of goods will be made through UNRRA facilities, Mr. Dubinsky added, but the garments will be made as quickly as more money is realized through the drive.

Metal Trades Unions Open Campaign For Higher Wages And More Jobs

Washington, D. C.—AFL metal trades unions pressed a double-barrelled campaign for more money than a half million workers in navy yards and other military establishments with higher wages and more jobs as the twin goals of the drive.

On the wage end, the unions are seeking pay rate increases sufficient to make up for the loss in take-home earnings that will accompany the shift of workweek from 48 to 40 hours.

Delegates from the Metal Trades Council of the country assembled here in Washington to confer with high Navy Department officials on the wage problem.

These conferences are a follow-up on a meeting held by top heads of the Metal Trades Department with President Truman at which, among other matters, the problem of the loss of higher wages for navy yard employes was taken up. At that time the President referred the matter to the proper authorities.

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"These plants can't go in for the manufacture of civilian goods. For that reason we are urging the War and Navy Departments to transfer to these establishments contracts with private industry for production of items that can readily be turned out in these government facilities.

"Such a plan will have a double advantage. It will enable the private companies to go ahead immediately to production of peacetime goods, and at the same time it will make jobs for the thousands who have been dropped at the government plants."

The problem of layoffs is not quite so severe in navy yards proper, Aflias explained.

"Navy yards are likely to keep operating at a fairly high level for some time—at least we have been so assured by the Navy Department," he declared. "For a considerable period the yards will be kept busy on the repair and reconditioning of ships in the American war fleet as they return to home ports."

Unlike private industry, these establishments cannot convert to production of peacetime articles, he pointed out by N. P. Alifas, president of District 44, International Association of Machinists.

"As a result, there have been heavy layoffs in arsenals, torpedo stations and other government-operated plants.

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Informs Congress Leaders
$25 Weekly Pay Still Is "Must" Bill

Washington, D. C.—President Truman told Congressional leaders at a White House conference that he will insist on enactment of the original Kilgore bill providing a uniform standard of as much as $25 a week for 26 weeks in unemployment compensation.

The Senate Finance Committee, however, already had reported out a denatured bill, eliminating any federal supplementation of state funds and retaining the 26-week duration provision only on a permissive basis.

This so-called compromise was considered wholly unsatisfactory by labor.

AFL President William Green appealed to all State Federations of Labor and city central bodies to communicate immediately with their Senators and Representatives in behalf of the Kilgore bill and the Full Employment bill. He said:

"It is becoming quite clear that strong and stubborn opposition is developing among a large number of members of Congress to the enactment of Senate Bill 1274, which provides for the payment of a maximum of $25 per week unemployment compensation during the reconversion period, and Senate Bill 380, the full employment measure, sponsored by Senators Murray of Montana, Senator Wagner, and other friends of labor.

"We have appealed to the members of Congress at public hearings on these measures and otherwise for their support and have carried on an aggressive, intensive campaign among the members of Congress in behalf of these measures.

"Because of this fact, we need the help of state federations of labor, city central bodies, federal labor unions, and all the membership of the American Federation of Labor. I call upon all to communicate with members of Congress by wire and letter urging them to support the unemployment compensation measure and the full employment bill herein referred to.

"Make it clear to them that labor is demanding the enactment of these measures into law promptly as recommended by President Truman in his recent message to Congress, and that their opposition to these bills and support of objectionable amendments will be considered as unfriendly acts and as antilabor votes."

The congressional situation was complicated by the threat of strikes and threats of strikes by CIO unions in the automotive and oil refining industries. Resentment against these tactics stiffened opposition to legislation backed by labor.

Worst stumbling block was the House Ways and Means Committee, dominated by southern Democrats and reactionary republicans.

Senators friendly to labor said that the House committee was threatened to pigeonhole any effective and progressive unemployment compensation measure that the Senate might pass.

Meanwhile Senator Kilgore served notice that he was prepared to put up a fight on the Senate floor for restoration of the $25 a week provision which was amputated from his bill by the Senate Finance Committee. Senator Mead also announced he would move on the same direction.

AFL ELECTRICAL WORKERS DEFEAT CIO IN TOLEDO

Toledo.—Local No. 245 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers delivered a smashing defeat to the CIO in a National Labor Relations Board election held among employes of the Toledo Edison Co. The vote was 661 for the AFL union to only 150 for the CIO.

SAY, LISTEN!

For the rest of this year, the AFL presents each Saturday evening at 6:45 P.M., EWT, over the nation-wide network of the American Broadcasting Company a radio news-magazine, featuring the latest news at home and abroad and special reports by expert commentators on important labor problems. This program is listed in the radio columns of your newspaper as "Labor-U.S.A." Our own subtitle for this program is "The American Federationist of the Air." Don't miss these bright, newsy broadcasts! Listen every Saturday night!